

CLAIMS

I claim:

1. A hybrid shopping basket/wheeled vehicle comprising:
  - a) a shopping basket, said shopping basket further being generally lightweight for carrying, of a material selected from rigid and semi-rigid, and having walls not foldable and not disassemblable, rim, and base generally quadrilateral in shape, said base having ends, sides, center and corners;
  - b) four legs, said legs pivoting between a legs-up configuration wherein said wheeled legs are triggerably cocked and secured generally parallel to said undercarriage when undeployed, and a legs-down configuration wherein said legs stand upright, elevatingly supporting said shopping basket;
  - c) an undercarriage, integrally formed in said base, to which said carriage legs are pivotally attached at said corners, further comprising two beams of generally rectangular cross-section, said beams spanning substantially from end to end of and generally parallel to the sides of said base, but inset from said sides by generally the cross-sectional thickness of one leg, each beam further having two slotted tracks extending symmetrically to the right and left of center for an intermediate length along said beams;
  - d) a means for releasably securing said four legs in the legs-up configuration, said means for releasably securing consisting of a mechanical linkage formed of scissors tongs center mounted under said base, a sliding detent pin, a mated detent pin receiver on said scissors tongs, sliding flying crossplates captive in said slotted tracks and pivotingly attached at either end of said scissors tongs, offset

pivot struts pivotingly attached to said flying crossplates at their lateral aspect and to said legs at a pivot positioned at a radius intermediate along the length of each leg from its pivot axis;

- e) a means for triggering release and deployment of said four legs from said legs-up configuration to said legs-down configuration, said means for triggering consisting of said mechanical linkage and a sliding control handle arm and control handle to operate said sliding detent pin;
- f) when freestanding with said legs deployed, inferiorly attached wheels for rolling said shopping basket as a wheeled vehicle from place to place.

2. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 1 further comprising compound legs pivoting on a lower shelf, from which said inferiorly attached wheels are appended.
3. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 1 further comprising at least one basket handle attached at the rim of said shopping basket.
4. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 1, wherein said shopping basket is injection molded from a plastic.
5. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 1 weighing less than 12 pounds (5.44 kg), more preferably less than 6 pounds (2.72 kg), and most preferably less than 3 pounds (1.36 kg).
6. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 1 wherein said shopping basket/vehicle, freestanding on legs deployed and wheels contacting a generally level and firm underlying surface, is stably supported so that said base of said shopping basket is stably elevated and

generally level at a height equal to or greater than the length of said base.

7. A specially adapted method for shopping comprising:
  - a) At times when carrying a hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 1, a step for triggering deployment of said legs and inferiorly attached wheels, whereupon said shopping basket may be freestandingly rested on said legs and inferiorly attached wheels;
  - b) At times when said shopping basket is freestandingly rested on said legs and inferiorly attached wheels, a step for rolling said shopping basket as a wheeled vehicle from place to place.
8. A method of claim 7 further comprising returning said hybrid shopping basket/vehicle when not in use to a location at which a next shopper will pick up said hybrid shopping basket/vehicle; said legs having been brought up around said undercarriage, triggerably cocked and secured in a legs-up configuration in preparation for use by said next shopper.
9. A method of Claim 8 further comprising a step for nesting unused hybrid shopping basket/vehicles in a vertical stack.
10. A method of claim 7 wherein said hybrid shopping basket/vehicle is wheeled from place to place while freestandingly rested and stably elevated at a generally level and convenient height.

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11. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle comprising:
  - a) a shopping basket, said shopping basket further being generally lightweight for carrying, of a material selected from rigid and semi-rigid, and having rim, base, and walls not foldable or disassemblable;
  - b) a plurality of legs attached at pivots to said shopping basket, further pivoting between a legs-up configuration wherein said wheeled legs are triggerably cocked and secured generally parallel to said undercarriage when undeployed, and a legs-down configuration wherein said legs stand upright and lock when deployed;
  - c) a means for releasably securing said plurality of legs generally apposed to the base of said shopping basket in a legs-up configuration;
  - d) a means for triggering release and deployment of said plurality of legs from said legs-up configuration to said legs-down configuration;
  - e) when freestanding in said legs-down configuration, inferiorly attached wheels for wheeling said shopping basket as a wheeled vehicle from place to place.
12. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 further comprising compound legs.
13. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 wherein said plurality of legs number an integer selected from two, three and four, and further wherein said legs are selected from straight leg, bent leg, "tee" leg, "ell" leg, "C" leg, "H" leg, "I" leg, "O" leg, "T" leg, inverted "T" leg, "Z" leg, compound legs, paired legs, and scissors legs, where compound legs describes a leg comprising any pivoted leg submembers that fold back on each other, where paired legs describes two or more legs crosslinked by at least one crosspiece disposed along their lengths, and scissors legs describes any two

legs joined by a pivot intermediate upon their lengths.

14. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 13 wherein said legs are triggeringly deployed by use of a body member selected from hand, finger, thumb, arm, knee, and foot.
15. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 13 wherein pivoting of said legs in at least one direction selected from legs-up to legs-down and legs-down to legs-up is assisted by gravity.
16. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 13 wherein said legs lock in the legs-down position by spring action.
17. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 wherein said plurality of legs, releasably secured in the legs-up configuration, are triggeringly deployed from said legs-up configuration to said legs-down configuration while carrying said shopping basket.
18. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 weighing less than 12 pounds (5.44 kg), more preferably less than 6 pounds (2.72 kg), and most preferably less than 3 pounds (1.36 kg).
19. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 wherein said hybrid shopping basket/vehicle, freestanding on legs deployed and wheels contacting a generally level and firm underlying surface, is stably supported so that said base of said shopping basket is stably elevated and generally level at a height equal to or greater than the length of said open basket.
20. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of Claim 11, further comprising a means for braking that acts on at least one said wheel.

21. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle claim 11 wherein said shopping basket is injection molded of a plastic.
22. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 21, wherein said shopping basket is injection molded with an integral undercarriage.
23. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 22, wherein a handle is integrally molded with said shopping basket.
24. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11, further comprising an undercarriage to which said legs are attached.
25. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 24, further comprising a means for detachably attaching said undercarriage from said shopping basket.
26. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 25, wherein said shopping basket is provided separately.
27. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 further comprising an informational data transceiver.
28. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 further comprising a radio frequency tag reader.
29. A hybrid shopping basket/vehicle as recited in claim 12, further comprising said compound legs pivoting on a lower shelf and inferiorly attached wheels affixed to said lower shelf.

30. A business method comprising a business model wherein an element of said business model comprises a hybrid shopping basket/vehicle of claim 11 in at least one step selected from the list:

- a) providing a customer with said hybrid shopping basket/vehicle;
- b) providing to a merchant by sale or lease a hybrid shopping basket/vehicle;
- c) providing to a customer a kit for assembly of a hybrid shopping basket/vehicle;
- d) providing to a customer a part for repair of a hybrid shopping basket/vehicle;

and further keeping spreadsheet records of inventory and sales performance.